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Chairman: Mr. Sharma ..... (Nepal)
Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. Mselle

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 122: Report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the Office of Internal Oversight Services

Inspection of programme management and administrative practices in the Department for Disarmament Affairs (A/56/817)

1. **Mr. Nair** (Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services), introducing the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) on the inspection of programme management and administrative practices in the Department for Disarmament Affairs (A/56/817), said that the inspection had been carried out in coordination with the forthcoming triennial follow-up on recommendations of an earlier in-depth evaluation of the Department. In accordance with the initial request of the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, emphasis had been placed on examining the regional dimension, which was one of the most promising aspects of the Department's activities. While OIOS had concluded that revitalization of the regional centres was on track, the centres' continuity and long-term viability were far from assured and would require resourcefulness, teamwork and persistence in building up their financial resources so that they could become the dynamic hubs of the Department's regional presence.

2. The inspection had resulted in an overall positive assessment of the Department's programme management and administration. The biggest challenge facing the Department was the disparity between the scale and complexity of its responsibilities and its limited staff resources, which were inadequate for the development of full-fledged research, analysis and policy planning functions. The Department should therefore seek the most efficient use of its own resources, mobilize extrabudgetary resources and pursue partnerships with other actors in order to achieve its programme objectives.

3. The report contained 25 recommendations, whose main thrust with respect to the programme of work was to improve the reliability of planning, make the monitoring of programme delivery more comprehensive, and promote the mainstreaming of disarmament into other substantive areas throughout the Organization. It also recommended that the Department's public outreach through both conventional and electronic means and its presence on the Internet should be strengthened and that specific measures should be taken to promote both internal and system-wide cooperation and coordination. It proposed decisive measures to ensure the long-term viability and effectiveness of the regional centres.

4. The Department had accepted 24 of the recommendations but had taken exception to the recommendation to discontinue its Regional Disarmament Branch, in the belief that it would be better to entrust the Branch with additional responsibilities that might revitalize it. OIOS was not immediately convinced of the viability of the proposed redesign of the Branch's functions and reserved its judgement until such time as the revitalization was actually carried out.

5. He was pleased to report, however, that the Department had taken immediate and decisive steps to implement the recommendations. During the seven-month period since the report had been issued, four recommendations had been fully implemented and five partially implemented, while implementation of 13 others was in progress. Only three of the recommendations had not been acted upon. OIOS would continue to monitor implementation of the recommendations contained in its report.

Inspection of programme management and administrative practices in the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (A/56/930)

6. **Mr. Nair** (Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services), introducing the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the inspection of programme management and administrative practices in the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (A/56/930), said that the inspection had reaffirmed the reputation of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) as a leader in research and analysis, a reliable source of impartial and competent policy advice and training services, and a clearinghouse for good practices for the region. Many of its outputs were considered standard references in specific subject areas in the region and had received worldwide recognition. Its public outreach and practices in the dissemination of outputs and

information were among the best in the United Nations system.

7. Overall, ECLAC had managed to produce more with less. Despite the one-third reduction in its staff, the volume of its implemented outputs had increased by at least 40 per cent during the previous decade. The recent modernization and decentralization process at the Commission had enhanced mid-level management initiative, flexibility and multidisciplinary teamwork. That process, however, should be counterbalanced by an equally effective system of accountability and oversight in order to prevent abuse. OIOS had also observed instances of duplication and lapses in the interaction between divisions and in the collaboration with the subregional headquarters of ECLAC. Management should therefore put in place a viable mechanism of communication and coordination and promote greater transparency in decision-making.

8. He was pleased to report that ECLAC on its own initiative had already submitted its initial report on the implementation of the 19 recommendations which OIOS had made to improve programme planning and performance monitoring, strengthen personal accountability, improve ECLAC-wide coordination and collaboration, and address specific issues of human resources management. A preliminary review of the report confirmed that three recommendations had been fully implemented and three others partially implemented, while implementation of the remainder was in progress. He wished to commend the Executive Secretary of ECLAC on his responsible, prompt and effective follow-up to the recommendations.

Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the audit of the policies and procedures for recruiting staff for the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (A/57/224)

9. **Mr. Nair** (Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services), introducing the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the audit of the policies and procedures for recruiting staff for the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (A/57/224), said that the audit had been conducted at the same time as the Office of Human Resources Management had been preparing the groundwork for implementing the proposals contained in the report of the Secretary-General on human resources management reform (A/55/253). The audit had found that the average time taken to fill regular vacancies in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations far exceeded the 120 days envisaged in the report of the Secretary-General. OIOS had been informed that the new web-based "Galaxy" system provided the necessary tools to monitor the recruitment process and should help to minimize delays in the filling of future vacancies in the Department. Full implementation of the "Galaxy" system should also result in enhanced transparency and better management of the recruitment process.

10. The audit revealed a number of other shortcomings in the Department's recruiting process. There was no evidence of use during 2001 of the numeric scoring methods for evaluating candidates envisaged in the report of the Secretary-General. There were also inconsistencies in the competencies and skills specified in the vacancy announcements issued by the Office of Human Resources Management for similar posts and posts at the same level in the Department. OIOS was of the view that the integrity of the recruitment process should be maintained by fully adhering to the eligibility requirements specified in vacancy announcements.

11. While the geographical distribution and gender balance of successful candidates were generally equitable and balanced, further improvements could be made when recruiting candidates for the additional posts that had been approved by the General Assembly in February 2002.

12. The five recommendations that had been made as a result of the audit had been accepted by the Office of Human Resources Management and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, which had already begun to implement them.

Post-implementation review of the Integrated Management Information System at United Nations Headquarters (A/56/879)

13. **Mr. Nair** (Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services), introducing the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the post-implementation review of the Integrated Management Information System (IMIS) at United Nations Headquarters (A/56/879), said that IMIS, the Organization's principal electronic data-processing system, was now in use at Headquarters in New York and at seven other duty stations. The report contained the findings of an audit conducted at Headquarters during 2001 to assess the management of the IMIS

project as well as the Organization's capacity to enhance, maintain and support IMIS in-house and evaluated the Organization's commitment to ensuring that the technical architecture was upgraded to remain in line with current industry standards. The audit also reviewed the adequacy and effectiveness of the security features of IMIS as a means of controlling access to the system and safeguarding the integrity of data.

14. A number of governance issues had been identified that still needed to be addressed. OIOS attached a high priority to its recommendations for the full implementation of the governance framework proposed in 1999 by the working group on IMIS of the Task Force on Common Services, the updating of the IMIS common services agreement, and the development of an IMIS strategic plan. A great deal of work remained to be done to consolidate IMIS data and fully integrate the System across all duty stations. OIOS strongly recommended that adequate resources should be made available to achieve such integration and urged the IMIS Steering Committee to finalize its evaluation of the viability of implementing the system in peacekeeping missions and the tribunals.

15. The report highlighted the need to address the question of the funding and personnel resources required to make continuing modifications and technological enhancements to IMIS and to deal with outstanding requests for system changes. Since IMIS was now established as a service within the Information Technology Services Division of the Office of Central Support Services, OIOS was recommending that its funding should be incorporated within the programme budgets of the principal "owners" of the system.

16. Other concerns of OIOS related to the inadequacy of existing audit trails and the ineffectiveness of security reports. OIOS wished to reiterate its earlier recommendation for an information systems risk analysis to be undertaken and an information systems security policy implemented. Given the Organization's increased dependence on the availability of IMIS, the Information Technology Services Division should take the lead in developing a business continuity plan that would ensure the continued delivery of core services in the event of a disaster.

17. The Organization had made a significant investment to develop and implement IMIS and the recommendations contained in the report of OIOS were aimed at maximizing the benefits from that investment. He was pleased to note that the Department of Management had accepted all of the report's recommendations as well as others of a more technical nature that were included in a separate report to management and that implementation of some of the recommendations had already begun.

18. **Ms. Wang** Xinxia, commenting on the reports that had just been introduced by the Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services, expressed concern at the length of time that it had taken to fill regular vacancies in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations during 2001. She hoped that the new "Galaxy" system would enable the Department to reduce those delays. In order to have a fair and transparent system of staff selection that would take account of geographic distribution and gender balance, the criteria for evaluating candidates must be based on a numeric scoring method. Special attention should also be given to troop-contributing countries and countries whose nationals were underrepresented or unrepresented in the Organization.

The meeting rose at 10.35 a.m.